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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Commission on the Common Core of Learning

Massachusetts Common Core of Learning

Thinking And Communicating

Within and across the essential knowledge areas, all students should:

READ, WRITE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Read and listen critically for information, understanding and enjoyment
Write and speak clearly, factually, persuasively and creatively in standard English
Distinguish fact from opinion, identify stereotyping and recognize bias
Read, write and converse in at least one language in addition to English

USE THE ARTS, MATHEMATICS, COMPUTERS AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES EFFECTIVELY

Apply mathematical skills to interpret information and solve problems
Use computers and appropriate technological methods to acquire, organize and communicate information and to solve problems
Use the arts to explore and express ideas, feelings and beliefs

DEFINE, ANALYZE AND SOLVE COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Make observations and ask relevant questions
Seek, select, organize and present information from a variety of sources
Analyze, interpret and evaluate information
Make reasoned inferences and construct logical arguments
Develop, test and evaluate possible solutions
Develop conclusions and present them in oral, written, and artistic form

Thinking is an active, energizing process that draws upon an individual's imagination, curiosity, open-mindedness and reasoning skills. Clear thinking is necessary to address the various issues of daily life. Creative thinking is the base for generating new ideas and possibilities and for meeting the future's challenge.

Lifelong Learning and productive work depend on people understanding and learning from one another. Skilful communication depends on strong reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Second language literacy fosters understanding among diverse peoples and prepares one for work in a world economy. The arts and technologies further expand our ability to communicate effectively.

Working And Contributing

All students should:

STUDY AND WORK EFFECTIVELY

Set goals and achieve them by organizing time, work space, and resources effectively
Monitor progress and learn from both successes and mistakes
Manage money, balance competing priorities and interests, and allocate time among study, work and recreation
Work both independently and in groups
Work hard, persevere and act with integrity

DEMONSTRATE PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Accept responsibility for one's own behavior and actions
Know career options and the academic and occupational requirements needed for employment and economic independence
Treat others with respect and understand similarities and differences among people
Learn to resolve disagreements, reduce conflict and prevent violence
Participate on a meaningful basis in community and/or school activities
Understand the individual's rights, responsibilities, and role in the community
Understand how the principles of democracy, equality, freedom, law and justice operate in society
Analyze how local, state, and national governments are organized and function
Analyze and develop informed opinions about current economic, environmental, political and social issues affecting the state, nation and world

Strong study and work habits prepare students to be productive learners and workers. Compassion, courage, honesty, justice, perseverance and self-discipline are widely held values. Students should learn how to distinguish right from wrong, make informed decisions, take responsibility for their actions, and achieve positive changes in their personal and community life.

Gaining And Applying Knowledge

All students should:

ACQUIRE, INTEGRATE AND APPLY ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Literature & Languages

Read a rich variety of literary works including fiction, poetry, drama and nonfiction from various time periods and cultures and relate them to broad human concerns, issues and possibilities
Analyze purpose and themes, draw implications from literary works, and communicate them through speaking, writing, artistic and other means
Know and understand the development and structure of English and other languages and how language helps to understand culture.

Mathematics, Science & Technology

Know and understand the major mathematical concepts such as measurement, estimation, quantity, probability and statistics; and, the relationship of mathematics to other areas of knowledge
Recognize and use patterns, construct mathematical models, represent and reason about quantities and shapes, draw accurate conclusions from data, and solve, justify and communicate solutions to problems
Apply the fundamental principles of the life sciences, physical sciences, earth/space sciences and the relationships of larger concepts such as patterns, systems, models, scale, constancy and change
Investigate and demonstrate how inquiry skills, science subject matter, mathematics, technological systems and human affairs are interdependent

Social Studies, History & Geography

Know and understand and make connections among important historical events, themes, and issues; recognize the role the past has played in shaping the present; and understand the process by which individuals and groups develop and work within political, social, economic, cultural and geographic contexts
Synthesize and communicate information about important events and fundamental concepts in state, national, and world history, including historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, Federalist Papers, and the Gettysburg Address
Know important information regarding the physical environment and understand concepts such as location and place, critical features of a region, demographic trends and patterns, and the relationship between people and the environment

Visual & Performing Arts

Know and understand the characteristics of visual art, music, dance and theatre, the importance of the arts in shaping and reflecting historical and cultural heritage, and the development of the creative process
Analyze and make informed judgments regarding the arts
Use one or more of the arts for personal growth and enjoyment

Health

Know basic concepts of human development, sexuality, parenting, nutrition, physical education and fitness, and understand the implication of personal health habits for self and society
Make informed and responsible judgments regarding personal health, including avoidance of violence, substance abuse and teen pregnancy
Use one or more physical activities for personal growth, fitness, and enjoyment

An expanding base of knowledge in essential subject areas enables students to be effective and productive individuals and citizens throughout life. Linking skills and knowledge acquired across the disciplines is crucial to student success. The quality of each student's future life will depend on his or her ability to continue to gain and apply knowledge.

Send written comments by June 10, 1994 to:
The Common Core of Learning, c/o Massachusetts Department of Education, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5023

Responsibilities

With this proposed statewide Common Core of Learning, Massachusetts will establish its goals for education. It is up to us all to take the actions necessary to achieve them for the benefit of all students. It will take time, but we must begin now.

How do we all make the Common Core work for the benefit of all school children?

STUDENTS must be in school ready to study and learn.

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS must encourage curiosity, love of learning and pride in a job well done so that children can be active seekers of knowledge and dedicated learners throughout their careers and lives.

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS must nurture confident children, so they are able to face the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS must cultivate integrity and respect so that children can contribute to their families and society.

SCHOOLS must be models for democracy and order, must demonstrate the principles of equality and justice, and the fair application of rules. Schools should encourage the involvement of families and community members by fostering active education partnerships, including mentoring.

SCHOOLS must provide opportunities to challenge students' capacities for learning in a meaningful context and must assist students in cultivating good work and study habits, to prepare them for the transition to the world of work.

SCHOOLS must strengthen the ability of students to understand and communicate effectively with others, by providing daily opportunities to develop communication skills and apply them to real-world problems and issues. Second language instruction must begin in the early grades.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES must work in partnership for the benefit of their children, to develop climates of safety in schools and environments that encourage high achievement and reward hard work.

COMMUNITIES AND THE COMMONWEALTH must fulfill their joint obligation to support the public schools, libraries and other educational resources at a level and with a commitment to ensure equal educational opportunities.

A commission of the Massachusetts Board of Education

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Commission on the Common Core of Learning

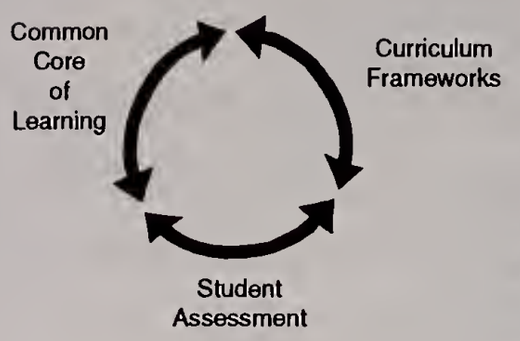
What Is The Purpose Of The Common Core Of Learning?

Every parent of a public school child in Massachusetts wants to know the answers to three questions:

1. What is my child's school trying to teach?
2. What is my child learning in school?
3. How is my child doing?

The questions can also be posed another way:

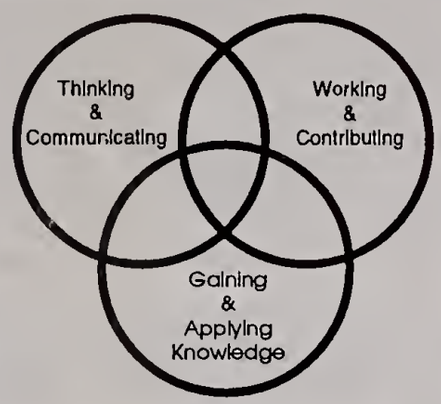
1. What are the broad goals of public education?
2. What are the specific curriculum areas to be learned?
3. How can we accurately measure student progress toward achieving these goals and mastering this curriculum?



The answers to these three questions represent steps in a comprehensive process which will result in improved educational opportunities for every public school child in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Common Core of Learning sets broad educational goals and is the first step in the education reform process. The next step is the development of state curriculum frameworks for the areas of the arts, English, foreign languages, health, history and social studies, mathematics, and science and technology. These frameworks will contain academic standards which will lend themselves to objective measurement. The third step is the development of an assessment system which evaluates student performance and measures the success of schools.

Every sector of the Massachusetts' community has contributed to the drafting of the Common Core of Learning. A 40-member Commission worked from September 1993 through May 1994 to gather ideas from across the Commonwealth, with the aim of setting high goals for all Massachusetts public school students. The people who communicated with the Commission and the Commission members themselves agreed that high expectations for all public school students are founded on the fundamental belief that *all children can learn and can meet high standards.*

With this belief uppermost in mind, the Common Core of Learning was written to focus on three vital areas of learning:



Preamble To The Massachusetts Common Core Of Learning

We Believe: **All children can learn and can meet high standards.**

This fundamental belief provides the foundation for establishing high expectations for all children in the Commonwealth with the goal that they lead productive, fulfilling, and successful lives in an increasingly complex, diverse and changing world.

In the 1950's, high school graduates could feel reasonably certain that school had prepared them adequately for lifetime jobs in American industry, jobs that would provide them with economic security and personal dignity. Today, due to global competition and new technologies, jobs are changing at such an accelerating pace that high school can no longer provide all the education one needs for life. Our children must become lifelong learners who can adapt to change and challenge and be prepared for the jobs and opportunities of the future.

We believe it is essential that all students be held to a high standard of achievement in reading, writing, speaking standard English, mathematics and science. Failure to do so denies many students the opportunity to participate fully in our society and economy.

We are aware that most residents of other countries have command of a second language, which provides expanded opportunity to communicate with others and to work in a world economy, as well as the ability to access and understand another culture. The Commission believes that all students should be provided the opportunity to learn a second language in elementary school, and should be encouraged to master that language.

The television age was just dawning forty years ago and a manual typewriter constituted high technology in schools and at work. Today children are consistently bombarded with messages through a vast array of media. The Commission believes students must become skilled at organizing, analyzing, and making sense of the vast information they receive. They must learn to evaluate arguments, spot hidden messages, analyze evidence, differentiate between fact and opinion, and make comparative judgments.

Not that long ago, most Americans did not worry about their environment. Now, the global population explosion, worldwide industrialization, increased use of natural resources and the degradation of rain forests and agricultural land require students to develop the skills to analyze the environmental issues that will face them in the future.

In recent years our family and neighborhood structures have broken down, the sense of community has diminished, and the social fabric of our civilized society has been torn by violence, substance abuse and an over-emphasis on materialism. Our children must learn how to get along with others, work cooperatively, participate in their communities and avoid and prevent violence.

The Massachusetts Commission on the Common Core of Learning recognizes that if children are to succeed in a changing world:

- They must have the skills and knowledge to continue to learn throughout their lives.
- They must be able to make informed decision for themselves, their families, their communities and the environment in the 21st century.
- They must be able to communicate effectively with others through reading, writing, the arts and technology.
- They must take responsibility for their own behavior.
- They must contribute to our society.
- They must understand people of different backgrounds in our increasingly diverse society.
- They must have an understanding of international and world issues.

The Commission suggests that the following nine principles are a necessary base to implement the Common Core of Learning and to attain higher academic standards for our children.

1. Our Commonwealth and society must foster a climate that honors education, encourages academic achievement, and rewards hard and thoughtful work.
2. Our Commonwealth, municipalities and citizens must fulfill their joint obligation to support the public schools financially at the level necessary to ensure equal and high educational opportunities for all students.
3. School systems must provide opportunity and support for quality professional development for all educators so that they can develop improved programs and reach their full potential in a vital, changing and challenging profession.
4. Our public schools and neighborhoods must be environments in which all children can study, learn and play in safety.
5. Families and other community members must be active participants in the education process through activities such as volunteering in school, mentoring students, encouraging studies, and strengthening informal learning through reading and outside learning activities.
6. All schools must have access to the newest technology and sufficient number of computers and other tools so that all students will be prepared for the technological society in which they will work and live.
7. The Commonwealth and the Massachusetts business community must play an active role in the development of school-to-work programs, student mentoring, and participation in teaching on a cooperative basis in the schools and in the workplace.
8. Alliances must be built between our public schools and our higher education system, both public and private, to enhance the quality of public education and provide meaningful access to higher education on a continuing basis.
9. Our society must encourage significant commitment by our children to the process of learning. We must challenge the assumption that there can be no limits on the amount of television children watch. Similarly, our society should define appropriate limits on the amount of paid employment by students during the school year. Students must recognize that the quality of their lives as adults is dependent on their education.

The Board of Education has stated that the mission of Massachusetts public education is to "provide each and every child with the values, knowledge and skills needed to achieve full potential in his or her personal and work life and to contribute actively to the civic and economic life of our diverse and changing democratic society." We believe that all citizens share a common responsibility to fulfill this mission.

A commission of the Massachusetts Board of Education

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